

# Praise Odes

by Jeff Schiff

## Praise County Line

Fruit & Veggie  
and other screech to stop  
honor box  
named and nameless  
roadside opportunists  
hawking red thumb  
and peewee fingerlings  
patty pan saucers  
zukes past their edible sellby  
pints and pecks  
dug from hobby  
and income plots  
campwood if you need it  
five bucks a brimming armful  
carving pumpkins ready  
later in the month

## Praise buzzards

rot sentinels  
cartoon condor wannabes  
drowsy in their crimson courtship caps  
a wake of wobbly turkey vultures  
wattled and snooded  
flapless in hemlock  
or sugar maple  
as you peddle  
swing low sweet carrion  
your doubletake dread  
hard hard  
damned hard away  
down soy hemmed roads

Praise caw caw  
and all human mimicry  
tweet and chirp  
feeble onomatopoeia  
the yap of turkey vultures  
courting in oak boughs  
geese barking their flotilla into line  
the shrill of Jays  
the trill the drum the clack  
the parrot the mock

Praise basking  
turtles  
leatherbacks paints and sliders  
no believers them  
in social distance  
in measured queuing  
draped and dangly  
over surfaced logs  
over lily roots  
jumbled they are  
on rock tops  
baled carapace to carapace  
flipper to flipper  
hard work that thermal management

Praise borers  
and tree drummers  
that urge to tap heart matter  
to signal  
to drill down to xylem  
to traffic in honeyed sap  
some tunneling their nuisance  
up from frass galleries  
tactically beyond view  
emerald ash and powderpost beetles  
some eager for the notice  
echoing their presence across copse and grove  
nuthatches and flickers  
redheaded  
downy  
pileated  
woodpeckers

## Praise bald

eagles  
this morning  
a mating pair  
just down  
from their flap and glide  
flap and glide  
and hollowboned soar  
looking me off  
at seventy paces  
birdy stinkeye  
birdy beakdeep in rodent viscera  
talon rip talon tear

## Praise congregational

life  
bunched on sagging limbs  
arrayed on utility lines  
swallows pigeons starlings  
unidirectional meetups  
flocks of do as I do  
bands preparing for flight  
perch and roost predators  
about to zero in  
prey in the distance  
pray down below

## Praise catch

and release  
two hunch and hand blow locals  
you name them  
Grumman dinghy  
puddled morning  
doomy skies  
moored atop spatterdock  
that predawn pulling from warm sheets  
that giving over  
to cold chop and whitecaps  
to walleye to perch  
and channel cat  
who don't measure up  
but somehow do

